

Weather Spotter Reporting Tip Sheet

(...or let's play many questions)

Information you might include or be asked when providing spotter reports.

Basic questions.

Where are you (city/town and/or direction and distance from city/town)?
What is your spotter number?

Tornadoes, waterspouts, funnel clouds, wall cloud. (Criteria, whenever you see one of these.)

Where are you?
Where is the tornado? Waterspout? Funnel cloud? Wall cloud?
Can you see it right now?
What direction is it moving?
Is it on the ground right now (for tornados or waterspouts)?
How long has it been on the ground (tornados or waterspouts)?
Can you see any damage?
If it is over already, what time did it happen?
Is it a well defined wall cloud, or is it mainly some rotation of some cloud fragments?

Hail (Criteria, 1/4 inch or larger.)

How big is the hail (diameter in inches)?
How much is on the ground?
Is it still hailing?
If it is not hailing at the moment, when did it stop?
Which direction is the cell that produced the hail moving?
Have you heard any thunder?
Have you had any heavy rain?
Have you had any strong winds?
Do you see any rotation in the clouds?

Lightning (Criteria, Frequent (4 or more per minute) cloud-to-ground lightning strikes.)

How frequent has the lightning been?
Is it still going on right now, or did it end a little bit ago?
Where is the thunderstorm from where you are?
Which direction is the thunderstorm moving?
Have you had any hail? heavy rain? strong winds?
Do you see any rotation in the clouds?

High Winds. (Criteria, sustained winds over 35 MPH, gusts over 50 MPH, trees/power lines knocked down, damage to homes, etc.)

If you have a weather station.

What is the average wind speed right now (averaged over a minute)?

How high has it been gusting to in the past 10 minutes?

What is the highest gust you've had so far?

When did that highest gust take place?

What is the average wind direction (N, S, E, W, SW, NW, NE, SE)?

Have you had any wind damage?

Trees, branches, blown down (and rough diameter of the tree or branch)

Any damage to the house? Out-building?

Have you heard of any damage or power outages elsewhere in your neighborhood?

If you don't have a weather station.

What is the Beaufort scale wind speed and corresponding number of the strongest wind you've observed?

When did that strongest wind take place?

What is the average wind direction (N, S, E, W, SW, NW, NE, SE)?

Have you had any wind damage?

Trees, branches, blown down (and rough diameter of the tree or branch)

Any damage to the house? Out-building?

Have you heard of any damage or power outages elsewhere in your neighborhood?

Heavy Rain (Criteria, ½ inch (0.50) in one hour. Two inches or more in 24 hours or less.)

How much rain has accumulated?

Over what time period have you measured it (from when to when)?

Is it still raining?

How hard is it raining (light, moderate, heavy)?

Have you had, or are you aware of any flooding?

Have you heard of any damage from flooding? Any roads flooded?

Have you heard of any mudslides or landslides?

Flooding (Criteria, flooding of any kind!)

Where is the flooding?

Are waters rising or falling?

How deep is the water (don't measure, be safe and just estimate it)?

Are there any roads flooded?

Are there any mudslides or rock slides?

Is there any damage from the flooding that you are aware of?

Snowfall. (Criteria, 1 inch or more per hour, 4 inches or more in 12 hours or less.)

For New snow events.

How much snow on the ground (for new events)? (snow depth in inches)

Is it still snowing?

How hard is it snowing?

What is the current temperature?

What is the current dew point temperature (if you have a weather station)?

For on-going snow events where you already had old snow on the ground.

How much NEW snow have you had?

What is your total snow depth?

Is it still snowing?

How hard is it snowing?

What is the current temperature?

What is the current dew point temperature (if you have a weather station)?

Freezing rain or sleet (Criteria, Any accumulation of freezing rain, freezing drizzle, or sleet.)

Do you have freezing rain or sleet right now?

How much has accumulated on the ground?

Freezing rain – Just a slippery covering, or something measurable?

If measurable, how much?

Sleet – How much sleet is on the ground (measure to ¼ of an inch)?

Is the ground wet with liquid water, or is it icy?

How long has the freezing rain or sleet been going on?

How heavy is the precipitation right now (very light, light, moderate)?

Do you have any damage?

Have you heard of any damage nearby (i.e. tree limbs snapping, power outages, lines down)?

Poor visibility (Criteria, Reduced visibility affecting vehicles. Less than 300 feet (1 football field) for dense fog or blowing snow. Less than ½ miles for blowing dust and volcanic Ash.)

What is the visibility?

Note: all questions below reference fog, but apply to blowing snow, dust, and ash as well.

Is the fog patchy or does it cover a big area?

Do you know how extensive the fog is?

How long has the visibility been at 300 feet or less?

Have you heard of any vehicle accidents that might be attributed to the fog?